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DISCOURSE

ON THE

Sinful Fear of M A N, ^{1/6}

AND A

Holy Trust in G O D:

Suited to Evil Tidings in Evil Times.

He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings: his Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His Heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his Desire upon his Enemies, Psalm cxii. 7, 8.

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A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
Sinful Fear of MAN, &c.

S E C T. I.

FEAR in its simple Nature is neither a Virtue nor a Vice, neither worthy of Praise nor Blame: It obtains contrary Names, according to the different *Objects* of our Fear, or the different *Degrees* in which it is exercised towards such Objects. To enlarge a little upon the Passion of *Fear* in general, and of *sinful Fear* in particular.

As to the general Nature of this Passion; *It is a Disturbance of the Mind, anxious to avoid a future approaching Evil.*

So that the Object of *Fear* is *Evil*, either real or imaginary. That which terrify'd the Wicked in *Isaiab's* Prophecy *, was a *real Evil*, even the greatest of Evils. *The Sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has surprized the Hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with*

* *Isaiab* xxxiii. 14.

*the devouring Fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting Burnings? But sometimes the Cause of this Passion is Fancy more than Reality; something in the Imagination only. As when the Psalmist tells us *, There were they in great Fear, where no Fear was; no sufficient Cause for Fear.*

The Object of *Fear* is some *future* Evil. When the Evil is *present*, our Fears are changed into Grief, our Terrors into Sorrows. The Passion of *Fear* still looks forward, spies the Storm at a Distance; and, while it passes by, as it were, the Evils that lie upon us, it disturbs the Mind with those in Expectation. The Apostle therefore, in a certain Case, calls it a *fearful* looking for of *Judgment*; not the suffering of it, but a looking for it.

Fear considers the Evil not only as *future*, but *approaching* towards us. While it keeps at a Distance, and makes no visible Advances, the Mind is usually pretty calm and quiet. To stir up the Passion of *Fear* in our Breast, it is needful to view the Evil in an impending State, as *near*, and the Danger as imminent. Those Judgments that moved not Sinners in the distant Threatning, cause Distress and Anguish in the approaching Execution. *Blow ye the Trumpet in Zion, and sound ye an Alarm in my holy Mountain. Let all the Inhabitants of the Land tremble; for the Day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand †.*

* *Psal.* liii. 5. † *Joel* ii. 1.

In this Passion of *Fear* there is an *Anxiousness* to avoid this future, approaching Evil. *Despair* sees no Remedy, and sits down unactive; but *Fear* hath always a Spice of *Hope* intermix'd, which gives Birth to Endeavours, and makes us active to escape the Evil which hangs over our Heads. Thus, *Noah*, being warned of God of Things not seen as yet, moved with *Fear*, prepared an *Ark* to the saving of his House *. *Courage* is active too, and resolute in the Use of those Means that are proper to keep off the impending Evil; but differs from *Fear*, in that it pursues with a calm and serene Spirit, or at least, with Expectation and inward Assurance, what *Fear* does with anxious Distrusts and Misgivings of Heart: Like the Woman in the Gospel, who expecting the Resentments of her Saviour for touching the Hem of his Garment, came fearing and trembling, and fell down before him, and told him all the Truth.

To speak something to *sinful Fear* in particular. And this may relate either to *Persons* or *Things*. We chuse to consider it, as it relates unto *Persons*. Now, there are three Sorts of Persons, more especially, of whom we are prone to be *sinfully afraid*.

We are apt to be *sinfully afraid* of such as are great and powerful, and have conceived a Displeasure against us, or against our Nation. Power and Strength in those that bear the

* Heb. xi. 7.

Disposition of Enemies towards us, create Disquietude of Spirit, and a Dread of the Consequences of their Resentments. The Frowns of *Saul* and his Nobles struck a Terror into *David*. The superior Force of his Enemy made him more apprehensive of Danger. *The Sorrows of Death encompassed me; and the Floods of ungodly Men made me afraid* *.

We are apt to be sinfully afraid of those who are possessed with a slavish Fear and Dread of us, especially if there be Subtilty and Numbers to render them considerable, The Terror upon their own Spirits makes them to look with an evil Eye upon us, to watch for and embrace every Opportunity of reducing our Power, and bringing us low; and spurs them on to such unnatural Acts of Cruelty, as Minds inspir'd with generous Courage would disdain. Now, while we observe such a slavish Dread in them, who by their Cunning and their Multitudes are in a Capacity to put this Danger to a greater Distance by Acts of Hostility against us, we naturally grow jealous, and full of timorous Solitude, so long as our Comforts and our Persons are within their Reach, The *Egyptians*, when the Encrease of the *Israelites* had rendered them formidable, say, *Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply; and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any War,*

* *Psalms* xviii. 4.

they

they join also to our Enemies and fight against us, and so get up out of the Land: therefore they set Task-masters over them to afflict them. Now such an uneasy Apprehension in others, usually excites a proportionable Dread in us, who consider our Mercies as envied and exposed; and hence feel the same disquieting Passions working in our own Breasts.

We are apt to be sinfully afraid of a People or Nation of a high and unforgiving Spirit, and who fancy themselves to be wronged by us. The proud and the implacable find it difficult to keep any Temper towards those that they conceive have injured them: They grow impatient, revengeful and desperate. Those Bands of Restraint which hold in others, *viz.* Mercy, Equity, and Self-Interest, are here of little Force. Their Wrath is cruel, their Anger is outrageous; and who is able to stand before their Envy? So that to keep the Rule of our own Spirits in such a Case, and not to feel the guilty Perturbations of inward and sinful Fear, is much more difficult.

S E C T. II.

TO enquire in the next Place, by what Signs it may be known, whether our *Fear of Man* be a *sinful Fear*, or no.

Now it is certainly a *sinful Fear*,
1st, When we are more afraid of *Man* than *God*; contrary to our Lord's Command, *I say unto*

*unto you, my Friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you, whom you shall fear. Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him *.*

Now, if we are more cautious of displeasing Man than God; if we are more solicitous to be reconciled to Men than God; if we are willing to forego more, and do more to abate their Wrath than his; if Men's Threatnings and Preparations to punish us make a deeper Impression upon our Spirits, than the Threatnings the great God denounces, or the providential Discoveries of his Displeasure against us; if we fancy ourselves safer, in the Favour and under the Protection of our fellow Creatures, against the divine Resentments, than we can persuade ourselves to be under the Shadow of God's Wing, and in the Assurance of his Love, against the Craft and Violence of Men; these are so many plain Indications that we are more afraid of Men than God.

2dly, When we fear *Men* more than *Sin*; reckon a guilty Conscience less to be dreaded than a Mortal's Frown. This is that *Fear of Man which bringeth a Snare †*. Now, if we can suffer Sin to rest upon others, and so have Fellowship with them in their unfruitful Works of Darkness; if we endeavour to screen ourselves from their Rage, by sordid

* *Luke iv. 5.*

† *Prov. xxix. 25.*

Flatteries, applauding their Vices; or by wicked Alliances with them, or perfidious Treachery towards them, or by unchristian Revenge; or if we be driven off from the Practice or Profession of Religion that we might escape their Fury, it is an evident Sign, that we fear Man more than Sin. Whereas *we should be in nothing terrified by our Adversaries, which is to them an evident Token of Perdition, but unto us of Salvation, and that of God.*

3dly, When the *Wicked* are more the Objects of our Dread than those that are *Good*; such as are in Confederacy with Hell, than those that are in League with Heaven: Tho' God has promised to bless them who bless his People, and to curse those who curse them *. Now if the Imprecations of the Ungodly terrify us more than the humble Complaints of the Godly against us, at the Throne of Grace; if we think ourselves securer in the Company of the Wicked, in a Time of publick Confusion, than in the Assembly of the Righteous; if we think ourselves safer, when defended with their carnal Weapons, than the Pious are with the Armour of God, or in having him for their Sun and Shield, their high Tower and Rock of Defence; if this be the Case, it is easy to determine, that a *sinful Fear of Man* has got the Ascendant over us.

4thly, When our Fear of Men *diverts* us from Duty, or *disturbs* us in Duty. Those

* Gen. xii. 3.

Passions, be they Fear or any other, which make us less frequent in Prayer, in hearing, in praising God, or any other Duty in our Christian Course; or that render us listless and cold therein, are doubtless, sinful as to their *Object* or *Degree*.

In a Word, if our Fear of Man transforms us into the Likeness of those we fear if it draws us into the same irregular Resentments and Defence, making us implacable, impatient, revengeful, like them; if our Fear of Man, (as it is said of the Wrath of Man) is so far from working the Righteousness of God, that it abates, or clashes with the Fear of God, and leaves us less under the Influence of spiritual and eternal Things, by the Fruits we may know it to be sinful and irregular.

S E C T. III.

AS a Dissuative from this *sinful Fear of Man*, we would do well to consider,

That it makes the Evil that we fear, worse than it really is: It is a magnifying Glass, and swells a Mole-hill into a Mountain. Many have sunk under the Weight of their own Fears, who but for them, would probably have stood under the Pressure of the very Evils they lived in fear of.

Fear makes the good Man less than he otherwise would be. It makes him less able, less willing to carry that Cross, which he apprehends

Sinful Fear of MAN.

prehends Man would lay upon him. A weak Christian, who is animated by a Spirit of Courage, will venture more, and endure more, than another Christian much stronger in other Respects, but sunk under the Burden of his own Fears.

It exposes us to that which is far worse than the Evils we fear, by diverting us from our Duty, and so laying us open to the Displeasure of God. This we learn from the Exhortation to the Prophet *Jeremiah*, *Gird up thy Loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not afraid at their Faces, lest I confound thee, or break thee in Pieces before them* *. Man is not much feared, but when God is out of Sight, or not duly remembered. *I, even I, am he, that comforteth you; and who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a Man that shall die, and of the Son of Man that shall be made as Grass? and forgets the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the Earth; and hath feared continually, every Day, because of the Fury of the Oppressor, as if he was ready to destroy? And where is the Fury of the Oppressor?*

So much for the Malady incident to human Nature, especially in evil Times, viz. *a sinful Fear of Men*. The best Remedy against this Malady, is a holy Trust in God, which we shall consider under the following Sections.

* *Jer. i. 17.*

B

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

A Holy Trust in God may be described thus : It is a *pleasing Rest of the Mind, arising from a lively Expectation of the probable or certain Enjoyment of some future substantial Good, or Escape from some future threatening Evil, grounded upon a strong Persuasion of the Divine Sufficiency and Faithfulness.*

That the Remedy may be more fully understood, and more deeply impressed upon our Minds, it will not be unuseful to take a more distinct Survey of the several Parts of this Description.

The *Object* of this holy Trust we make to be both *Good* and *Evil*. For we may and ought to put our Trust in God, not only for the Mercies we want, but also against the Calamities we fear : To procure the Good ; *Trust in the Lord, and do Good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed **. To prevent the Evil ; *O Lord my God, in thee do I put my Trust. Save me from all those that persecute me, and deliver me †.*

In a holy Trust, we consider this Good or Evil as *future*, as something at a Distance and to come. Man is endowed with a Power to foresee approaching Wants and Dangers ; how desirable such an Enjoyment would be in future Life, or how grievous such an Affliction :

* *Psal.* xxxvii. 3.

† *Psal.* vii. 1.

And

a Holy Trust in GOD. † 3

And to ease his anxious Cares or Fears about the one or the other, he is allowed, he is commanded to put his Trust in God concerning them. And as *Fear* looks forward, and is employ'd about some distant, endangered Good, or threatening Evil; so this holy *Trust* which is designed as an Antidote against that *Fear*, looks at the same distant Objects also.

Where there is this holy Confidence in God, we not only survey the Blessings we would enjoy, or the Miseries we would escape, but our Minds are wrought up to an actual Desire, to an inward Hope and real *Expectation*, viz. to enjoy the one, and escape the other. It is what we look and wait for.---- While Despair sees no possible Help in either Case, a *holy Trust* in God removes the Impossibilities, and can hope against Hope, or under the greatest visible Discouragements. Thus *Job*, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him* *. It enables us to believe, that all Things shall work for our Good, when every Thing seems to make against us; and to depend upon the promised Blessing, when all the Ways that lead to it, are to human Reason shut up: As it is said of our Father *Abraham*, that *against Hope, he believed in Hope, that he might become the Father of many Nations* †.

A Heart fixed, trusting in the Lord, carries in it a *lively* Expectation of those Things, even such as bears some Proportion to the ex-

* *Job* xiii. 15.

† *Rom.* iv. 18.

cellent Majesty of that God, in whom our Trust is reposed, and to the Ground and Foundation upon which it stands.—Were our Expectations languid and low, the Restraint they would lay upon our Fears would be but weak and feeble, and our Trust in the Lord would partake of the same Weakness, and consequently would be but a very imperfect Remedy against our Fears.

This holy Trust in God supposes the Enjoyment of the future Good, or the Escape of the future Evil *probable* or *certain*. This we mention to shew, that though the Object of our Hope may appear difficult, it must not be judged impossible. Such an Apprehension would stab our Confidence in God. We shall never trust in God for that which either seems an Overmatch for his Almighty Power, or contrary to his unchangeable Decree: To shew also, that there may be a holy Trust in God, without supposing the highest Assurance of every Blessing we hope for. Some Mercies indeed make a necessary Part of our supreme Happiness, or of the Means that lead to it; and some Evils carry Destruction in their very Nature, or Ruin and Destruction is the unavoidable Consequence: Here a full Assurance of Hope is warrantable, and what a fixed Trust in God will raise us to. But other Mercies or Evils are of a middle Nature; what we may want or feel, consistent with our best Interest, or future Blessed-

Blessedness. Here therefore our Hope is genuine, if it rise up only to the Degree of probable Connection there is between the Means and End.

It carries in it a *pleasing Rest* of the Mind. A *Rest* of the Mind. *Fear* is tempestuous, and raises Storms; but this holy Trust lays them again, and smoothes the tumultuous Waves; it discharges the Soul of its painful Impatience, that created Torment, and gives it *Rest*. A *pleasing Rest*; not such as arises from a mere Freedom from Pain and Anxiety, from a Temper of Indifference about future Good or Evil; or from a dozing Stupidity caused by a secret Despair, which makes some Men resolute and careless: But such a Rest as well-grounded and agreeable Prospects excite in the Soul. We are bid therefore to *hold fast the Confidence and the Rejoicing of our Hope firm unto the End*.

It is such a Rest as has the *Divine Sufficiency* and *Faithfulness* for its Foundation; God's Power and Promise; *who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think* *: And who hath assured us, *If we commit our Way unto the Lord, and trust also in him, he shall bring it to pass*.

It is such a Rest as arises from a *strong Persuasion* that these Attributes are engaged on our Side. We shall never have our Hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord, if we suspect,

* *Eph. iii. 6.*

that with God there is *Yea* and *Nay*. We must be persuaded that all his Promises are in Christ *Yea*, and in him *Amen*, or our Trust will be as the Waves of the Sea, driven with the Wind, and tossed. Neither shall we know what this holy Confidence doth mean, while we say only, with the Father of the Demoniac, *If thou canst do any Thing, have Compassion on us, and help us* *. We must be persuaded, that all Things are possible to him that believeth God's Promises, or we shall never experience that Confidence in God, which hath great Recompence of Reward.

S E C T. V.

TO enquire, why we should labour after such a holy Trust in God, especially at a Time, when we are afraid of evil Tidings from Men.

And here the Reasons are various; some arising from our *Fear* itself; some from the *evil Tidings* of which we are afraid; some from the Consideration of a Heart fixedly *trusting* in God; and some from the very *Being* that our fixed Trust is placed upon.

Some arise from our *Fear* itself. A holy Trust in God is now the more needful, to prevent the *Extremity* of Fear, to allay the *Torment* of it, and to escape the *Snare* that attends it.

* *Mark* vi. 34.

I. To

1. To prevent the *Extremity* of the Passion. When Fear is up, it is in its Nature impetuous and violent; and if a Restraint be not laid upon it, apt to hurry the Mind into Distraction, or Despair; to sow the Humours of the Body, and to breed Distempers there; and even sometimes to furnish us with the Instruments of Violence to end our Lives: So that a holy Trust in God is needful at such a Time to fix Bounds to the Passion itself, and to prevent its Extravagancies. Nothing is a better Antidote against Fear, than that inward Hope which such a Confidence in God revives in us, according to the Psalmist, *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the Goodness of the Lord, in the Land of the Living* *.

2. To allay the *Torment* of Fear. It is a Passion that keeps the Soul in Bondage, and is a continual Rack unto the Mind. There is a great Deal of Pain and Anguish in its Constitution. Hence some are said *thro' the Fear of Death to be all their Life Time subject to Bondage* †; to a painful Perplexity of Spirit. Now a holy Trust in God is desirable at such a Time to assuage this Pain, and to draw out the Anguish in our Minds, that we might know some Intervals, at least, of pleasing Ease and Rest; that our Spirits might recover Strength, and be refreshed, as the Psalmist exhorts, *Wait on the Lord; be of*

* Psal. xxvii. 12.

† Heb. ii. 15.

good Courage, and he shall strengthen thine Heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.*

3. To escape the *Snare* of such Fear. Fear is restless, makes us impatient for Relief; and so drives us to false Dependencies, or to irregular Means to obtain an Interest in what we make our Trust. We, rather than want a present Remedy, are tempted to trust in a *Staff of a broken Reed*; whereon if a Man lean, it will go into his Hand and pierce it. When Saul saw the Host of the *Philistines*, he was afraid, and his Heart greatly trembled. || What Course does he betake himself to in this Extremity? Why, rather than bear the Torture of this Passion any longer, he goes to the Witch of *Endor* to know the Issue. So that a Heart fixed, trusting in the Lord, is necessary at such a Time to escape the Snare; that we perceiving that there is Help for us in God, may not make Flesh our Confidence, but wait in a Way of Duty on him, who is a promised Refuge in Time of Trouble. Again,

If we attend to the *Evil* we are afraid of, it is at such a Season requisite in a special Manner to have our Hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord whether it be to prepare us *for* the Evil, to preserve us *thro'* the Evil, or to save us *from* it.

1. A holy Trust in God is necessary in order to prepare us *for* the Evils of which we are afraid. What can reconcile us more to ap-

* *Psal.* xxvii. 14.

|| *1 Sam.* xxviii. 5.

proaching,

proaching, impending Evils, than this? To see our Right in better Blessings, than those that are now in Danger; and to be persuaded of the secret Tendency of future Troubles, should they come, to secure those Blessings. *Why, now* those whose Hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, have God himself for their Inheritance, and this is the Ground of their Hope and Confidence; *The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul; therefore will I hope in him**. They know that their Treasure is in Heaven. They are satisfy'd that the main Prize is safe, and beyond the Reach of Danger; that their Crown of Glory however, is secure: And then they know also, that all things will work together for their good, while they shew their Love to God by reposing their Trust in him. And thus, they are provided against the Storm. It is for this Cause *Paul* and his Companions fainted not, to consider, how their *light Afflictions, which were but for a Moment, were working for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*; how they were, with the Captain of their Salvation, to be made perfect by Sufferings.

2. In order to preserve them thro' the Evils of which they are afraid. At such a Time the Devil is a busy Adversary, and our Graces are tried to Purpose. Satan hath desired to have us, that he might sift us as Wheat; and when we fall into divers Temptations, 'tis called a Trying of our Faith. So that we have

* Lam. iii. 24.

need of Patience at such an Hour. But now there is nothing contributes more to the Strength of Patience, than an holy Confidence in God, that his Grace shall be sufficient for us, and his Strength made perfect in our Weakness. This humble Dependence, if any thing, must enable Patience to do her perfect Work; which lies in composing the Heart to a sweet and submissive Frame under Sufferings; in keeping under all Emotions to repine and murmur; in enabling us to wait for Deliverance in God's Time and Way, enduring to the End. Nay,

3. Such a holy Dependence is necessary to save us *from* the Evils we fear. This holy Confidence in God is the great Qualification to which Salvation is annexed. — We might here enumerate some of those Evils we are prone to fear from Man; and shew what a particular Provision there is made against those Evils, in the gracious Promises annexed to such a holy Trust.

Overthrow and Defeat in a Day of Battle, is what we are prone to be afraid of, especially, if the Enemy be better appointed, and more numerous than we. But now Victory is promised to those who hope in God, notwithstanding the Multitude of their Adversaries. This is assigned as the Reason, why Forty-four Thousand *Israelites* prevailed against a Host much higher than they, and slew of the Enemy 100,000 Men. *They were helped against them,* says the Text, *and the Hagarites were*

were delivered into their Hands, and all that were with them. For they cry'd to God in the Battle, and he was entreated of them, because they put their Trust in him *.

To be rejected and forsaken of others; to live as a Sparrow upon the House Top, or as a Pelican in the Wilderness, without the Regard or Pity, of our Acquaintance, Friends, and Equals, is a Condition we naturally dread and fly from. --- But now a Confidence in God delivers us from this Evil, or at least the Sting of it. *None of them that trust in the Lord shall be desolate; forsaken, or comfortless †. They that hate the righteous shall be desolate.*—

Reproach and Calumny is another Object of our Fear. We are very apprehensive of every Thing that may give an open Stab, or secret Wound to our Reputation. Hence we are cautioned against an anxious, solicitous Fear about this Evil. *Fear ye not the Reproach of Men: Neither be ye afraid of their Revilings.* Now a holy Trust in God will not only relieve us against those timorous Apprehensions, but also deliver us from the Evil we Fear. *Commit thy Way unto the Lord, trust also in him; and he will bring it to pass. He shall bring forth thy Righteousness as the Light, and thy Judgment as the Noon Day ||*

The precarious, uncertain State of all our Enjoyments by reason of surrounding Enemies and Dangers, is another Occasion of painful Solitude and Fear. But needful Mercies are

* 1 Chron. v. 20. † Ps. xxxiv. 21, 22. || Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6.

not the more exposed to Hazard, if we regularly trust in God. For *they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the Mountains are round Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his People, from henceforth, even for ever* *.

If we regard the Act itself of *trusting* in the Lord, we shall find that the Time in which we are afraid of evil Tidings from Men, is the fittest Season for the Exercise of this Grace. Our Dependence is then more *genuine*; is then more *needful*.

More *genuine*. When we are afraid that other Supports will fail us, our Confidence in God is more pure and uncorrupted. There are no Mixtures of fleshly Confidence to sully and stain its Glory. It is a Sign that God is in great Esteem with us, and that we magnify his Perfections and Faithfulness in our Thoughts; when in a Time of fearful Expectation, and Danger from second Causes, we can without any human Props, stay ourselves upon God's Almighty Arm and Truth. And so it affords the greater Comfort.

It is then more *needful*. There is nothing now to keep our Heads from sinking, our Hearts from fainting, but what this holy Trust doth afford. We look upon all Creature-Aid as expiring or staggering before us: In such a Case, our Hearts must as it were give up the Ghost, and die, if no Comfort flows from

* *Psal. cxxv. 1, 2.*

this Fountain. So that if a fixed Dependence upon God be ever necessary, it must be at such a Season, when Men of low Degree appear to be Vanity, and Men of high Degree a Lie, nay, altogether lighter than Vanity, when laid in the Balance; Nothing now affording solid Relief against our disquieting Fears, but a holy Confidence in God.

Once more; if we regard the very *Being* our Trust is reposed in, a Time when we are afraid of evil Tidings from Men, is the fittest Season for the Exercise of this Grace. For now God is *most glorified*, and *most ready to help* us.

Now he is *most glorified*. We hereby declare, that the invisible Things of God are great Realities, and that his bare Promise is exceeding great and precious, a sure Foundation for Hope: We declare he can save without the Creature, and beyond what its united Force is sufficient for. We represent God to our Minds as more than all Creation, and able to deliver, not only without others, but when they all conspire against us; in as much as, in such a Conjunction of Fear from them, we can make God our Confidence.

At such a Season God is *most ready to help*. Then in a more especial Manner we are bid to stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord. While outward Helps are near, there is less need, less room for any immediate Dependencies upon God, or for any special Interpositions of his. But now that other Saviours confess themselves broken Reeds, we
are

are called to give Glory unto God by believing; for the special Season for his intervening Help is now come. According to that, *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble. Therefore will not we fear, tho' the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea, tho' the Waters thereof roar, and be troubled; tho' the Mountains shake with the swelling thereof;* for now, in a special Manner, *there is a River, the Streams whereof shall make glad the City of God. God is in the midst of his People, he shall help them and that right early**,

S E C T. VI.

WE shall shew, how a holy Trust in God tends to *prevent* or *abate* a sinful Fear of Man. It becomes serviceable for this Purpose, by instructing us that Men are but the Rod in God's Hand; and therefore that the great God hath a more principal Agency in the Evils we are afraid of, than they.—By representing the great God by far more mighty and inclinable to prevent such Evils, than Man is to inflict them.—By persuading us that the Benefit we expect from the Hand of endangered Mercies, may be conveyed unto us another Way.—By opening to us the manifold Advantages that may arise from the sanctify'd Improvement of the Evils we are threatned with.—By creating in us a

* *Psal. xlv. 1, 2, &c.*

more just Indifference about those good Things, the Loss of which our Fears are employed about.—And by abating those towering Thoughts we are prone to entertain of Man, from whom the Evils we are afraid of, are expected.

1. By instructing us that Men are but the Rod in God's Hand; and therefore that the great God hath a more principal Agency in the Evils we are afraid of, than they.—They whose Hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, believe that his Record is true. This Belief is the great Pillar and Support of their Dependence. But now what is the Record God hath given concerning such Evils? *I form the Light, and create Darknes: I make Peace, and create Evil: I the Lord do all these Things.* In what express and full Terms is the superior Agency of the Divine Majesty concerning such Evils, as Man is the Instrument to inflict, asserted? *O Assyrian, the Rod of mine Anger, and the Staff in their Hand is mine Indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical Nation; and against the People of my Wrath will I give him a Charge to take the Spoil, and to take the Prey, and to tread down like the Mire of the Streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his Heart think so, but it is in his Heart to destroy and cut off Nations not a few*.*

Now a holy Trust in God disposing us to give Credit to this Divine Record, concerning

* *Isa. x. 5, 6, 7.*

his chief Interest in all such Events, we are naturally led to sink our Fear of the Creature, and to direct it towards the Creator, perceiving that our principal Danger, if any, is from this Quarter. For, *whatever Devices there be in any Man's Heart, the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand* *. This petty Passion of Anger in Man therefore, which once disturbed our Breast so much, is now swallowed up in a more awful Dread of that excellent Majesty, which has the sovereign Direction of all these Things.

2. By representing the great God by far more mighty and inclinable to prevent such Evils, than Man is to inflict them. Those who have a holy Confidence in God, are much in the Contemplation of the divine Omnipotence and Mercy; they delight to consider God as clothed with Almighty Power and infinite Compassion. For this Reason, they chuse to place their Trust in God, in Preference to any Creature singly, or all Creation together, as the Rock of their Confidence. Hence, when the combined Malice and Force of Men present themselves to our Thoughts and speak great and swelling Words in our Ears, striking Terror and Dismay into our Souls; we are led to set the out-stretched Arm of the Almighty and his tender Mercies against them: And finding these Attributes awful and amiable, vastly an over-match for what we fear in Man, we readily conclude, that the Arguments for Hope are much weightier than

* *Prov. xi. 21.*

those which plead for slavish Fear. And thus we are comforted concerning the Evil we liv'd in the fearful Expectation of. We consider, there is more to be hoped for from him who is mighty to save, and who delighteth in Mercy, than there is to be fear'd from the feeble Rage of those whose tender Mercies are Cruelty.

3. This holy Trust in God becomes effectual to assuage our guilty Fears of Man, by persuading us, that the Benefits we expected from the Hand of endangered Mercies, may be conveyed unto us another Way. If the Blessing itself be obtained, it matters little, how it is conveyed. Now, our Dependence being upon God for the Blessing itself, (who has Ways without Number to bestow it, of which we know not one) tho' the usual Way of Communication be cut off, we are not greatly afraid. There are other Passages still open, and we hope to receive the principal Favour thro' some of them. This was Matter of Support, in the Case of the three Children of Israel, against the cruel Decree of Nebuchadnezzar. *If ye worship not the golden Image, ye shall be cast the same Hour into the midst of a fiery Furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my Hands?* They are not careful to answer Nebuchadnezzar in this Matter, because the Mercy (if their heavenly Father should judge a longer Life a real Mercy to them) might be secured notwithstanding. *If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace; and*
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he will deliver us out of thine Hand, O King.

4. By opening to us the manifold Advantages, that may arise from the sanctify'd Improvement of the Evils with which we are threatned. Could we look upon such Evils as medicinal, as a wholesome Bitter design'd to mend our spiritual Appetite, that's viciously turned from substantial Blessings, to an over-weaning Fondness for earthly Things; could we hope, that the threatning Dispensation, like the Refiner's Fire, would purge away the Dross only, restoring us to a greater Likeness to God, and letting us into a more intimate Communion with himself; were we persuaded we should reap many real and valuable Benefits by those very Evils, should Man prevail against us; this would smoothe the deform'd Visage of such Calamities, and make their Approach less frightful.—Why now, a holy Confidence in God tells us thus much. We fall into such Temptations, only if need be. And *the Wrath of Man shall praise God* (shew forth the Praise of his faithful Compassion towards us) *and the Remainder of Wrath* (what would not serve such beneficial Purposes, as these) *he shall restrain.* For this Cause, says the Apostle, *we faint not, but tho' our outward Man perish, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day.* For *our light Affliction* (speaking of his Sufferings from Men) *which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory **

* 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.

5. By

5. By creating in us a more just Indifference towards those Objects, about which our Fears are employed. Our Fear is proportionable to our Love. Where our Love to any Mercy is inordinate, our Fear of that which threatens the Loss of it, will be inordinate too. Now, a holy Trust in God tends to unfix our Hearts from this World, and tells us such blessed Things of a better Country, that we are rather weary of these deceitful Joys, desirous to be gone. And we are not much disturbed at what Man can do, while the Mercies within his Reach are so trifling, compared to those valuable and durable Blessings above, which neither their Policy nor their Wrath can endanger.

6. By lessening those towering Thoughts we are prone to entertain of Men. They who have their Hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord, meditate upon his Perfections as an Encouragement to such a Dependence. They represent God to their Minds as *independent*, and therefore under no Temptation to desert his People, in order to secure his own Interest; as *immutable*, whose Love and Care therefore they may safely rely upon, his unchangeable Promises standing engaged for them, in every State and at all Times; as *eternal*, and therefore able to answer their Expectations, when Creatures die, and the Frame of this visible World shall be dissolved. This puts them in Mind of the vast Disproportion between the Object of their Hope and Fears. What a dependent, mutable,

mortal Being Man is ! How unworthy to have such a Place in their Dread ! And this shames them out of the Inordinacy of the Passion which would otherwise enslave them, to the Disturbance of their inward Peace and Joy.

S E C T. VI.

WHERE this Trust and Confidence in God is *sincere* and *regular*.

We shall not found our Dependence upon an Opinion of our own Merit, or any natural or necessary Connection between the Act of trusting in God, and Help from God ; but upon his free and gracious *Promise*, who out of his infinite Compassion, and in regard to his faithful Engagements, condescends to be the Rock and Saviour of those that put their Trust in him. Christians, therefore, are exhorted to *gird up the Loins of their Mind, to be sober, and to hope unto the End, for the Grace that is to be brought unto them at the Revelation of Jesus Christ* *. A Dependence that has our own Worthiness as the Basis of it, is corrupt and spurious.

We shall be animated to our Duty, and made more active in the Service of God : *Every Man that hath this Hope, purifies himself, even as God is pure, †*. A Trust in God which leaves us listless and sluggish in his Cause, is either presumptuous or nominal,

* 1 Pet. i. 13. † 1 John iii. 3.

Those who pretend to rise high in their Expectations from God, and yet can lay down nothing for these Prospects, no Pledge of thankful Obedience before-hand, shew they have a very contemptible Opinion of the Blessings themselves, or a very slender Dependence upon the Performance of the Promise, or a very fond Conceit of their own Merit.

We shall be diligent in the Use of such Means as God hath appointed, either in the Nature of Things, or by special Command, to escape the Evils, of the Tidings of which we are afraid; and we shall cautiously abstain from every Thing that would obstruct the expected Deliverance. None so vigorous in their Application unto Means, as those who are most sanguine in their Hopes of Success. That Trust in God is only a Pretence, an Excuse to indulge our Sloth, and to ease us of the Disagreeableness of the Means, which under a Shew of Dependence upon God, tempts us to neglect that Part which is incumbent upon us, and to which the Blessing is promis'd.

Where our Dependence is *sincere* and *regular*, we shall not depend so much upon the Means themselves, as upon God working either by them, or without them. Thus *Mordecai*, tho' he intercedes with *Esther* for his People, and entreats her to be a Mediator with *Abasuerus*, as the most likely Means; yet his Trust is not so much in *Esther*, as in the *God of Israel*. He orders a Copy of the Writing
of

of the Decree, which was given to *Shushan* to destroy the *Jews*, to be shewn unto her, and charges her to go in unto the King, to make Supplication unto him, and to make Request before him for her People. But when she seemed desirous to decline the Service, because of the Danger; does he immediately despair? No; but looks *above* her. *If thou altogether holdest thy Peace at this Time, they shall their Enlargement and Deliverance arise from another Place; but thou and thy Father's House shall be destroyed. And who knoweth, whether thou art not come to the Kingdom for such a Time as this? **

S E C T. VII.

THE Rules proper to be observed, in order to gain a holy Confidence in God, as at all Times, so at a Time, when we are afraid of evil Tidings from Men, are such as these:

Let us be much and diligent in the Study of our Bibles. Let the Word of God dwell richly in us. There is a sweet Combination in all its Parts, to beget and cherish this Grace. It is mentioned as one grand Design for which the Scriptures were indited. *Whatever Things were written aforetime, were written for our Learning; that we thro' Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope †.*

Let us preserve our Integrity. Let not pre-

* *Esther* iv. 8, 14. † *Rom.* xv. 4.

sumptuous

sumptuous Sins have Dominion over us: It will be difficult, it will be impossible to keep up a fixed, a lively Trust *in God*, while we are waging a deliberate War *with God*. Therefore the Apostle joins Holiness and Hope together, living godly in this World, and looking for the blessed Hope, laid up for us in the other †. They are both connected as Links of the same Chain. “ All Sin, says one, is aguish Meat. It disposes the Soul that tampers with it, to trembling Fears and Shakings of Heart.”

Be importunate in Prayer to obtain this Grace.— St. Paul thought it of such vast Importance, that by his Good-will none should be without it, without the highest Degree of it; and therefore is earnest with God for the converted *Romans*, that *they might be filled with all Hope and Peace in believing, that they might abound in Hope, thro’ the Power of the Holy Ghost, **

To encourage our believing Addresses to God, even for temporal Mercies, we shall add a Word or two in this Place, concerning the Efficacy of Prayer, in the Words of a late, learned Writer.

“ God, indeed, hath not the Passions of a Man; and therefore he is not to be moved by Prayers and Entreaties, as Men are. But tho’ he hath not the Passions of a Man, he hath the Wisdom of a wise and good Governor. And as he hath commanded us to pray,

† *Titus* ii. 3. * *Rom.* xv. 13.

in respect of our Weakness; so, for our Encouragement to do it, he hath annexed, to the due Performance of this Duty, Blessings temporal as well as spiritual. That we are directed to pray for the former, is most evident. For when we pray for our *daily Bread*, we pray for temporal Blessings, as for Rain and fruitful Seasons, for Success in our Occupations and Callings, and the like; so it is, when we pray for Deliverance from our Enemies, from Afflictions and Calamities, for all which there are Directions in Scripture. Now it seems a natural Inference from our being commanded to ask these Things from God, that our Prayers will do something towards obtaining them; and the Style of Scripture imports as much. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be open'd, ** But it is most expressly asserted by St. James, Ye have not because ye *ask not*; or, *because ye ask amiss* †. And the effectual, fervent Prayer of the righteous Man availeth much. These Passages, with others that are easy to be met with, shew plainly that the Prayer of the upright is strictly and properly efficacious with God, and it hath the Efficacy of a Condition or Qualification, by which God hath determined in the Wisdom of his Providence, to grant many Things to those that ask him, which he will

* Luke xi. 9. † James iv. 2, 3. and Chap. v. 16.

not grant to those that ask him not. — It is not easy to make sceptical Men enter into this Notion. — True, God hath not left every Thing to depend upon the Prayers of Men. This he could not do, without resigning the sovereign Authority out of his own Hands, into the Hands of his Creatures. But that nothing depends upon them, or that it will be in all Cases equally the same Thing, whether we pray, or whether we let it alone, no Experience can possibly show. For there are a Thousand Ways, in which the Hand of God may be employed in sending Good or Evil, which do not fall within our Notice. And amidst all that Inequality observable in God's Dealings, with respect to this World, there may be still so much Regard paid to Piety, as to verify the Promises of God, and make it worth every Man's while to serve him faithfully. The main Strokes of Providence which lie within the Compass of our Observation, may be determined by settled Laws, respecting the general System of Nature, which the Behaviour of Men cannot alter. And yet there may be other Acts of it, serving only as Under-Parts, to fill up the Harmony of the whole, (but of the greatest Importance to the Happiness of particular Persons) which admit of Variety, and leave God at Liberty to determine this Way or that Way, as particular Reasons shall direct. — Tho' we have not the Evidence of Sense, that God hears the Prayers of good
E Men,

Men, we have the Evidence of his Word ; and his Word is not the less to be relied on, because he fulfills it in such a Manner, as to leave room for the Exercise of Faith, and Trust in him, which is the proper Work of a Christian, in this State of Trial." But to return ;

Be much in the Exercise of this Grace. Upon every returning Occasion, endeavour to stir up yourselves to trust in God. Repeated Acts strengthen the Habit. What the Prophet speaks of spiritual Knowledge, *Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord **, is equally true in the Case before us. Then shall we trust in the Lord, if we follow on to trust in him. Our Dependence will grow stronger and stronger by frequent Exercise.

Let us treasure up the past Experiences, we have had, of God's providential Interpositions in Times of Danger. *This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope †. David* would certainly have been more dismay'd at the big Looks and disdainful Deportment of that proud *Goliath*; had not the Remembrance of past Salvations encouraged his Faith. *The Lord that delivered me out of the Paw of the Lion, and out of the Paw of the Bear, he will deliver me out of the Hand of this Philistine ||. When the Psalmist* takes a Review of what God had done for him in his former Distress; how he had heard his Prayer, baffled the Design of his Enemies,

* *Hosea. vi. 3.* † *Lam. iii. 21.* || *1 Sam. xvii. 37.*
and

and preserved his Life, when there was but a Step between him and Death; he encourages himself to trust in God, and to triumph in that Trust. *It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put Confidence in Man; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put Confidence in Princes. The Lord is on my Side, I will not fear what Man can do unto me. The Lord taketh my Part with them that help me; therefore shall I see my Desire upon them that hate me **.

Remember, that our real Danger is not according to Man's Threatnings, but God's Purposes. What the wicked resolve to do against us, God may determine to reverse. The Prophet is ordered to rebuke *Israel's* Fears on this very Score. *Take Heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint hearted, for the two Tails of these smoking Fire-brands, for the fierce Anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the Son of Remaliab; Because Ephraim, Syria, and the Son of Remaliab have taken evil Counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a Breach therein for us, and set a King in the midst of it, even the Son of Tabeal†. i. e. Fear not with that Amazement or Fear, which weakens, and has Torment. Let not Fear betray the Succours which Reason and Religion offer for thy Support. For the very Thing which Abaz thought most formidable, is made the Ground of their Defeat, viz. the Depth of their Designs, and the Height of their Hopes. They*

* *Psal.* cxviii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

† *Esa.* vii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

were spiteful and malicious, secure and confident of Success; and therefore they shall not prosper, — Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the Head of Syria is Damascus, and the Head of Damascus is Rezin, and within threescore and five Years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a People.

So when Benhadad sent unto Abab, and said, The Gods do so unto me and more also; if the Dust of Samaria shall suffice for Handfuls for all the People that follow me. The King of Israel nobly answers, and says, Let not him that girdeth on his Harness, boast himself, as he that putteth it off. And tho', when Benhadad heard this Message, he said unto his Servants, Set yourselves in Array; and they set themselves in Array against the City; yet the Sword of Divine Vengeance is turned from Israel upon him and his Armies. And behold, there came a Prophet unto Abab, King of Israel, saying, Thus saith the Lord, hast thou seen all this great Multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into thine Hand this Day, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. And Abab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord, even by the young Men of the Princes of the Provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the Battle? And he answered, Thou. — Then he number'd the young Men of the Princes of the Provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: And after them he numbered all the

the People, even all the Children of Israel, being seven thousand. — And they slew every one his Man: And the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: And Benhadad the King of Syria escaped on a Horse, with the Horsemen. And the King of Israel went out, and smote the Horses and Chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great Slaughter, *.

Thus, tho' the present State of Affairs, whether at Home or Abroad, may have impressed some amongst us, with too great a Degree of Fear; yet let this be our believing Prayer, O thou that savest, by thy Right Hand, them which put their Trust in thee, from those that rise up against them, shew us thy marvellous loving Kindness. Thou that hast delivered, dost deliver, and we trust and pray that thou wilt yet deliver us. Deliver us from all our Fears. Say unto us, as thou didst unto thy People Israel, Thus saith the LORD, your Redeemer, the holy One of Israel, for your Sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their Nobles and the Caldeans, whose Cry is in the Ships. I am the Lord, your holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King *. And when I have performed my whole Work upon Mount Zion, and on your Jerusalem, I will punish the Fruit of the stout Heart of the King of Assyria, and the Glory of his high Looks. For he saith, By the Strength of my Hand I have done it, and by my Wisdom; for I am

* 1 Kings xx. 10—15, 20, 21. † Isa. xliii. 14, 15.
prudent

prudent; and I have removed the Bounds of the People, and have robbed their Treasures, and I have put down the Inhabitants like a valiant Man. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, send among his fat ones Leanness, and under his Glory he shall kindle a Burning, like the Burning of a Fire. And the Light of Israel shall be for a Fire, and his holy One for a Flame; and it shall burn and devour his Thorns and his Briers in one Day: And shall consume the Glory of his Forest †. For, wo unto them that seek deep to hide their Counsel from the LORD, and their Works are in the Dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of Things upside down shall be esteemed as the Potter's Clay: for shall the Work say of him that made it, He made it not? or shall the Thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no Understanding †?

* Esai. x. 12, 13, 16, 17, 18. † Chap. xxix. 15, 16.

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F I N I S.

Errata, P. 11. l. 21. r. forgettest. l. 23. r. hast. p. 12. l. 5. r. threatening. p. 14. l. 12. for of, r. from. p. 18. l. 30. r. Evils. p. 19. l. 5. for Why, r. Now. p. 20. l. 31. for bigger, r. mightier. p. 21. l. 28. for the Judgment, r. thy Judgment. p. 30. r. Sect. VII. p. 32. r. Sect. VIII. p. 34. l. 19. after one, r. that.